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# Reconfiguring the Spaces of the “Creative Class” in Contemporary Berlin

*Simon Ward*

The impact of gentrification has been particularly tangible in Berlin since the turn of the century. Elsewhere in this volume, Schuster-Craig investigates how these tensions manifest themselves in terms of the ‘integration’ debate in the specific district of Neu-Kölln, and how cultural production has sought to address these. Linking to the contribution of Sark on the cultural history of post-Wall Berlin in this volume, but focusing on the conditions of production, rather than production itself, the present contribution analyses how gentrification impacts on the availability of spaces for cultural production across the city, ultimately illustrating how this particular problem is now being seen in relation to the integration of marginalized groups into the city.

In 2014, a book entitled *Berlin Wonderland* was published that commemorated the early years of *Tacheles*, an artist collective that had gathered, in the immediate post-unification period, in an abandoned building, a former department store in the center of the former East Berlin. *Berlin Wonderland* created a relatively ordered archive of photographs and testimony of the years from 1990 onwards when, as the book’s preface described it:

In East Berlin, entirely new dimensions of freedom arose – political, social and cultural. Empty buildings that had been quietly decaying were occupied by new

inhabitants. Cultural projects and artists from all over the world moved in. With a spirit of improvisation, imagination and creativity, they laid claim to an intermediate zone whose open spaces became meeting points for the most diverse of people. Suddenly the possibilities seemed immense.<sup>1</sup>

This publication was significant for two related reasons. First, the book represents the kind of nostalgic longing that Sark analyses in her contribution to this volume, translating this period of cultural activity in Berlin into the realm of cultural memory, as if there was a felt need to preserve not only the period, but also the possibilities represented – in that both were under threat of vanishing. It curated the activities of those years into a series of categories (e.g. “City as Stage”, “Wild Gangs”) which describe a model of cultural activities in an intermediate space and time – what has become known as *Zwischennutzung* (*transitional use*).<sup>2</sup> Second, the publication appeared at a time when such a model of productive, imaginative collective action was subject to severe economic pressure as the difficult situation regarding studio provision for artists in Berlin reached the crisis point that is the focus of this article.<sup>3</sup>

The multifarious activities at *Tacheles* (artistic production and exhibition, bar, cinema, etc.) can be read as an example of what Sharon Zukin described as a new view of art focused on art as a “way of doing” rather than a distinctive “way of seeing” that had emerged in the wake of Fluxus and similar international avant-garde art movements of the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> For Zukin, in this form of art, site and product become largely synonymous and with it a definition of the role of art as a catalyst for cultural and social change in collective public space. Such an art also redefines the boundaries of the space in which the artist works and operates, and his or her relationship to other users of public space.

Well before the current crisis around studio space emerged, a Spiegel-online article published in October 2007 reported a new study that suggested that Berlin was poised for a boom driven by the “creative class.”<sup>5</sup> The study, conducted by the Berlin Institute for Population and

Development and financed by the non-profit Robert Bosch Stiftung, based its work on the theory of growth potential developed by Richard Florida. Florida's 2003 book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, identified the "creative core of this new class" which includes "scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers and architects."<sup>6</sup> Martha Rosler has observed that Florida's coupling of "artists and bohemians with all kinds of IT workers and others not remotely interested in art or bohemia, has been identified by many observers—perhaps especially those involved in the art world—as a glaring fault."<sup>7</sup> Florida's coupling of artists with other creative laborers indicates that they share, up to a point, in the process of urban regeneration. In her 1982 study of *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*, Sharon Zukin laid out a theory of urban change in which artists and the entire visual art sector—including those spaces that were run by artists themselves—were a key engine for the repurposing of the post-industrial city. Crucial to Zukin's analysis was the eventual displacement of those artists, a development not of interest to Florida.

As we shall see, the discourse in Berlin around the "creative class" and in particular the spaces and milieus in which they work is certainly informed by Florida, albeit negatively in that his refusal to acknowledge the specificity of artists in constructing an amorphous "creative class" prepares the ground for the process of displacement that Zukin described. That kind of displacement is viewed less critically by John Montgomery, who in 2005 asserted that "the days of funding endless self-serving 'community arts action' groups, of seeing art as a proxy for social work, should soon be over."<sup>8</sup> Clare Colomb and Johannes Novy's discussion of recent connections between collective artist production and social protest in Hamburg and Berlin offers a strong counternarrative.<sup>9</sup>

This article argues that there is a reconfiguration of the "creative class" going on in Berlin at the present moment, around the dividing line between the "artist" and other creative workers. This contemporary reconfiguration reimagines how the artist relates not to the high earners identified by Florida, but to workers who are less privileged and whose earning levels place them at risk from

rent rises, and who can be described as members of a “culture precariat” (*Kulturprekariat*), a term which will be delineated in more detail below. The article argues that the prime driver of that reconfiguration is the contemporary crisis regarding spaces for cultural production in Berlin in recent years, a crisis that has thrown into question the model which has been predominant in Berlin since the early 1990s. By considering a series of contemporary studio spaces, this article elucidates a differentiated understanding of the relationship between capital investors and cultural producers, as well as new models of what constitutes the space of cultural production, a model which is becoming increasingly important at the time of writing.

2014, the year of *Berlin Wonderland*’s publication, was a year of crisis for sites of cultural production in the city, as tensions between capital investors and cultural producers made them visible. Anna Pataczek introduced her series of articles in the *Tagesspiegel* in that year with an ominous description of the situation:

Berlin is the most important place for the creation of new art, we are told. But the space available is becoming ever scarcer. Studios and workshops are being pushed out, to make way for residential accommodation.<sup>10</sup>

In line with the Zukin model of displacement, Patschek’s article outlined the repurposing of a series of post-industrial spaces that had been (temporarily) used for artistic purposes. Amongst these was the site of the former Schultheiss brewery in Moabit (in the former west of the city), which had been bought by the investor Harald G. Huth, in order to be reconfigured as a shopping center.<sup>11</sup> Another example was a former piano factory, the *Mengerzeile* in Alt-Treptow. These artists had celebrated their anniversary in 2013, but that year saw the death of the owner, who, as a benefactor, had hoped to gift it to the artist collective. The factory was in fact sold off, and with a plan in place to convert it to residential accommodation, a (still ongoing) battle of the studios continues at this point of writing.

The BLO-studios (named after the *Betriebswerk Lichtenberg Ost*, the railway depot built on the site between 1881 and 1894) were presented by Patschek in 2014 as a potential beacon of resistance in the situation. The BLO-studios are situated at a location that is by no means central—Lichtenberg is to the east of the more fashionable district of Friedrichshain, and the former railway depot, unsurprisingly, finds itself the wrong side of every track that funnels into Lichtenberg before the final stretch towards Alexanderplatz and the city center. The site was “discovered,” four years after its closure, in February 2003 by Thomas Seyffert und Daniel Rabe, who had been taking part in a project organized by the self-stylized “self-organized social-cultural center” RAW-Tempel e.V.<sup>12</sup> RAW-Tempel itself took shape from 1999 onwards, on the former railway repair site “Franz Stenzer” which had closed in 1995. Indeed, in the anniversary frenzy that seems to have consumed the cultural scene in Berlin 2014, RAW-Tempel also celebrated fifteen years of “cultural activity” (*Kulturarbeit*) in that year.

2014 marked the end of a ten-year rental contract had been agreed with the *Deutsche Bundesbahn* (German Federal Railway Company), and renewal negotiations in 2014 did not appear to be going well. The demands of the railway company included threats of a 120% increase in rent prices, in order to mirror other—residential—rents in the area, thus illustrating one of the key tensions between capital investors, who do not always see the need to respect the different requirements and possibilities of cultural producers in reflecting upon what constitutes a “market price.” This dispute is not yet resolved. Another plan mooted at the time rejected artistic use altogether, and sought to use the site for the relocation of the S-Bahn museum from Potsdam-Griebnitzsee. The rhetoric around this suggestion (which came from the CDU) emphasized that the “location” was in an “interesting space for development” in the city, an “attractive residential area with varied character.”<sup>13</sup> This kind of rhetoric fits neatly into the Zukin model of displacement which comes with urban regeneration.

The same CDU proposal also highlighted the restructuring of the area north of the Frankfurt Allee, focusing on the reconfiguration of the former buildings of the Ministry for State Security

(Stasi, MfS) as a “campus of democracy.”<sup>14</sup> Regeneration here was linked to the democratization of the material legacy of the Stasi, here with the former Operative Technical Sector building in the formerly restricted area in Alt-Hohenschönhausen beyond Friedrichshain, being transformed into the Intelligence Department Studios.

The opportunity to develop this area emerged as a result of the Berlin regional government divesting itself of the physical inheritance of the GDR state. The three buildings here that were formerly part of the Stasi infrastructure were bought in 2009 by the Immonen-Group, a “real estate investment and development company,” founded in 2007, and “operating in Berlin.”<sup>15</sup>

The Group expressly claims to have been influenced by the ideas of Richard Florida, devoting a page of their website to the theory of the “creative class” and its benefits to the city (“Berlin's economic growth and real estate development has proven it right!”).<sup>16</sup> They claim that they “have successfully lead innovative and unique projects that contribute to and benefit from the diversified horizon of creativity and growth in Berlin.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed the ID-Studios is one of four (very different) projects described on their website, and the only one specific related to artistic production. The others include are a large area of land situated in Alt-Hohenschönhausen, which will offer 140,000m<sup>2</sup> of diverse real estate, including mixed residential, commercial and service areas, gastronomy and hotels. This is a project from which, they claim, “the city district and all of Berlin will profit as an example of modern urban development.”<sup>18</sup> Another project is a 3,000m<sup>2</sup> *Jugendstil* monumental hotel building built in 1903, which is being developed into a multipurpose hotel, spa and residential complex.

The ID-Studios is currently one of Berlin’s largest studio complexes. Compared to the fifty artists housed at BLO-Studios, ID-Studios contains around two hundred fifty artists, of whom many are sculptors (which gives an indication of the size of the studios available). The relationship between capital investors and cultural producers is less antagonistic here, as questions of ownership/tenancy, and contractual relations, have been very clear from the start. Indeed Ariel Levin, spokesperson for the group, has highlighted the creation here of a “little artist city.”<sup>19</sup> This

disconnection of artistic production from wider social processes is clearly in the interest of capital investors who are seeking to use the cachet of conventional conceptions of the artist for marketing purposes. While there is little that is strikingly original about the other development projects described above, the ID-Studios is somewhat different, in that traces of the past are not entirely erased here. Under the GDR regime, the site was responsible for the development, production, and maintenance of all espionage equipment including wiretapping devices, cameras, camouflage, and monitoring instruments. Levin has noted that this former space of Stasi technical experimentation has now become a site of artistic experimentation.

In fact, the Immonen group trades on the unique historical authenticity of the location, observing that the location (right next to the Höhenschonhausen Stasi-memorial site) had retained many of the historical features, focusing on the “charm of the GDR [*sic*]” in the maintenance of large-scale doors, the lifts and even the showers “with their algae-blue tiling from 1985.”<sup>20</sup> A large space, originally built to provide soundproof “interview” room for the Stasi, had been retained for future use as gallery space.

In 2002, David Harvey’s reflected on the motivations of capital investors at such transitional spaces, obliged as they were to “support forms of differentiation and allow divergent and to some degree uncontrollable local cultural developments that can be antagonistic to its own smooth functioning.”<sup>21</sup> According to Harvey, “it is within such spaces that all manner of oppositional movements can form even presupposing, as is often the case, that oppositional movements are not already firmly entrenched there. The problem for capital is to find ways to co-opt, subsume, commodify and monetize such cultural differences just enough to be able to appropriate monopoly rents therefrom.”<sup>22</sup> In Harvey’s account, culture and opposition flourish as an unintended consequence of capital’s need to not totally destroy a location’s uniqueness, which is the basis for the generation of what Harvey terms “monopoly rents.” Hence capital can even support “transgressive” cultural practices precisely because this is one way in which a space can be marketed as original, creative and authentic as well as unique. The ID-Studios project profits from



the notion of the authenticity of the site, but by engaging with its tenants as individual artists undoes any sense of the collectivity that Harvey imagines in a model which belongs to the *Tacheles* pattern discussed above.<sup>23</sup>

While this strategy of marketing the past is foregrounded at this former Stasi site, the former Broadcasting House (*Funkhaus*) of the GDR, the world's biggest connected building (on a 50,000m<sup>2</sup> area), has not traded so explicitly on its historical legacy. It had served from 1956 until 1990 as the premises of the East German broadcasting services in Berlin, and was sold off in to the Israeli property entrepreneur Albert Ben David through Keshet GmbH. Under the slogan "Space for Their Ideas" the Keshet GmbH & Co. rented out the rooms of block A as studios and workshops for mostly young artists from winter 2011/12 onwards. In that sense, it fit in with the general growth of "creativity" in this rather distant, southeastern corner of the city. Indeed the area around the *Funkhaus* was identified as a crucible of creativity in an article in the *Berliner Zeitung* in 2012. This was evidenced not only by the presence of artists but also the thousands of students nearby at the new campus for the *Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft* (College for Technology and Economy) at Wilhelminenhof. This development was marked from 2008 onwards by the "Kunst am Spreekniefest" festival, which crucially involved not only artists but also design students from the HTW who exhibited fashion designs as well as that sine qua non of the contemporary creative industry, the computer game.<sup>24</sup>

In the summer of 2015, it was revealed that ownership of the *Funkhaus* had passed to the entrepreneur Uwe Fabich. Fabich was presented in the *Berliner Kurier* as a "real-estate phantom," who does not allow himself to be photographed.<sup>25</sup> If Fabich might then appear as the "invisible hand" of capital, he nevertheless possesses the very concrete biography of a 41-year-old, having studied Business Management in Berlin, Hong Kong, and New York, and worked in London for Deutsche Bank. Interviews with Fabich have certain elements in common in the discursive construction of this figure. These representations emphasize his casual dress sense, but also his background in finance; they also present him as a developer of potential spaces in the city, as he had

bought the Postbahnhof in the Oranienburger Strasse (previously the location of the C/O photo gallery, and a few hundred yards from the *Tacheles* site), and descriptions of him emphasize a speed and tempo that we might easily associate with finance capitalism.<sup>26</sup>

In terms of monopoly rent, the historical authenticity of the *Funkhaus* does in fact play an important role in Fabich's vision for the site. Interviews reiterate the story he tells of his "discovery" of the building—by boat from the Spree. Fabich makes it clear that one of his aims is to recreate this moment of discovery by establishing a ferry route that would bring an audience (of cultural consumers) to the *Funkhaus*. Here, as it were, we can ourselves "discover" culture; at the core of Fabich's vision is a lifestyle experience that the *Funkhaus* offers, cut off as it is from the main cultural circuits and infrastructural routes of the city.

Fabich's initial interventions in the site have been interesting. The Block A of the *Funkhaus* is a five-story building, and the top story, previously housing offices grander but in structure similar to those that had been transformed into studios on the floors below, has been reconfigured into a large, open space. Viewed skeptically, the creation of such a fungible space would obviously lend itself to a form of residential "loft living" in due course.

The *Funkhaus* currently combines production and exhibition, as seen in the "Arcadia Unbound" group exhibition which ran in early September 2015 at the *Funkhaus*, after Fabich had taken over the running of the site. One of the co-organizers of this exhibition was the artist Janine Eggert, who had moved to the *Funkhaus* from the former Schultheiss brewery in Moabit when those studio spaces were repurposed in 2014. Eggert described the *Funkhaus* as an "abandoned, forgotten idyll that we are trying to reawaken back to new life through art."<sup>27</sup> The artists here clearly work with a notion of the uniqueness of the space and the uniqueness of artistic production as mode of engagement with the space. Sibylle Jazra, another co-curator, claimed that the exhibition sought to create a dialogue between the architecture and the art, so that, for example, the two large broadcast studios were used for audio- and video-works. The authenticity of the location guarantees the "authenticity" and significance of the artist creations, some of which, as with Ingo Gerken's

“BIG EASY,” playfully interact with the building’s existing forms.

The press release highlighted the variety of different architectural forms and features:

Such as long curved hallways, spiral staircases, columned halls, and various textured surfaces of marble and wood. [...] “Arcadia Unbound” especially generates an opportunity of dialogue & tense confrontation of artwork on environment. This particular and unusual architecture leads to a new and extraordinary emphasis on the artworks.<sup>28</sup>

The press release’s claim that the “exhibition breaks deliberately with the rules of a White Cube” does not sound particularly groundbreaking; indeed the *taz* described the exhibition as “sympathetic, but not exactly visionary,” despite the presence of several renowned international artists amongst the participants.<sup>29</sup> While some reviews favorably considered the relationship between the installations and their setting, more important was perhaps the “amazing” nature of the location (as iHeartBerlin described it on their Facebook page).<sup>30</sup>

To return to Harvey’s arguments about the operations of “monopoly rent” in this context, the situation at the *Funkhaus* demonstrates that it is not only capital that thrives on the assertion of the unique “authenticity” of locations, but rather cultural production here that also co-opts the past. As one blogger, Rea McNamara, describes it, here there is the “still lingering *ostalgie* (nostalgia for the East) that looms largely in the collective unconsciousness of many *wahlberliners* [by-choice Berlin inhabitants].”<sup>31</sup> McNamara claims that “until its capitalist makeover is complete, the *Funkhaus* Berlin remains a unique site of discourse between the loaded built environment of the East and the booming culture of the city’s present.”<sup>32</sup> What McNamara does not recognize is that this site of interaction is precisely part of the makeover process, where cultural production and consumption are sited in a particular unique and authentic (or “amazing”) location. This process already buys into the logic of the ultimate decoupling of artists from other forms of creative

production, which are understood as complicit with the “capitalist makeover.”<sup>33</sup>

These three locations illustrate different aspects of the relationship between the capital investor and cultural producers: conflict in the case of the BLO-Studios; incorporation within the investor project at the Studios-ID; and an emerging complicity in the marketing of the space at the *Funkhaus*. The term “Arcadia,” and its gloss by Eggert, is fascinating here. It has no political connotations, and any sense of a utopian perspective is subsumed within the pastoral trope. “Arcadia Unbounded” is a significant construction of the space as “apolitical” but also “free” in the sense that it is not affected by the constraints of society.

All three situations invoke, in different ways, the assumption that the space of the ‘artist’ is a sacrosanct space, something which has also, up to now, been visible on an institutional level in the city. Since 1993 the Berlin Senate has funded an “artists’ studio” program, which has played an important role as an enabler of artistic production in Berlin. The program, run through the *berufsverband bildender künstler* (*Professional Association of Visual Artists*, hereafter bbk) offers financial support to artists, covering part of their studio rent at certain locations throughout Berlin, and has supported over a thousand artists over the past two decades. The bbk website contains a wide range of documentation relating to the Studio Program, including video interviews with the major players in the program, as well as with artists who have benefitted from it.<sup>34</sup> The image composition employed in these videos is significant as, by filming the artists individually in their studios, it decouples them from any sense of a broader or collective context. This separation is underlined by the interview of the artists themselves, as they consistently highlight the importance of an appropriate individual “studio space” as a space of creation, one that is also close to the Berlin art world; for Birgit Brenner, studio space is separated from the misogynist capital processes of the art market, while for Stefan Saffer it is a crucial space of production that ultimately benefits those who “steal and profit” (Saffer’s words) from it.<sup>35</sup>

The crisis of studio space was documented in an article in the Berlin listings magazine *tip* from 2014.<sup>36</sup> The author of that article, Constanze Suhr, followed a group of artists from the

aforementioned *Mengerzeile* complex in search of new studio space, bringing to the fore some of the considerable problems which they, and the bbk, faced in finding locations that were appropriate both in terms of dimensions and amenities, but also in terms of infrastructural connections to the city. This problem has been addressed on a theoretical level by the Berlin collective *raumlabor*, in their project ‘Art City Lab,’ which produced a publication of that name in 2014. While they look in this project at various existing models of ‘reuse’ of existing buildings, in Berlin but also beyond, perhaps the most striking proposal that they investigate is the flexible use of prefabricated units that can be installed at low cost in small, unused spaces within the inner city.<sup>37</sup>

Beyond the presentation of these alternative models, *raumlabor* also staged a discussion on the concept of studio space amongst interested parties (cultural producers and facilitators) in Berlin. This discussion brought to light an important distinction in addressing questions larger than simply the studio space of the artist, as expressed in a significant disagreement between Florian Schmidt, the director of the bbk’s artist studio program, and one particular curator, Adrienne Goehler. Goehler argued strongly for understanding artists within the broader context of the *Kulturprekariat* which includes independent designers and architects who suffer from a great deal of instability due to the nature of their professions. Goehler suggested that the focus on studio space was an “oversimplification.”<sup>38</sup> Schmidt, on the other hand, was particularly concerned with preserving a clear qualitative distinction between visual artists and other creative and cultural professionals since, in Schmidt’s view, “art is indeed a profession, but it’s usually not considered a trade .... If we could agree that the visual arts operate beyond the market ..., then these special requirements are a good tool for arguing that we can’t ignore.”<sup>39</sup>

The significance of this focus on the “artist’s studio” becomes clear when we consider that, in September 2015, the Berlin Senate produced proposals to reconfigure the Studio Program. Under these plans, the Studio Program would evolve into a general program for the provision of space for “artists and creatives” (“*Künstler und Kreative*”). In addition, a conversation between Florian Schmidt, the bbk commissioner and the cultural administrators suggested they were planning a

move towards “interdisciplinary and creative collaboration” in “flexible spaces,” signaling the end, as Schmidt saw it, of “professionally usable spaces for professional artists.”<sup>40</sup> This discursive shift is crucial, for it seems to indicate a “homogenization” of the perception of “creative space,” in line with the kind of coupling enacted by Richard Florida.

The concluding section of the article investigates a different conception of studio space that is emerging in Berlin, which allows us to consider a contemporary reconfiguration of the “creative class” in a way that is not simply defined by the description of that class provided by Richard Florida.

In 2007, the non-profit company ExRotaprint was founded in order to bring new life into the former premises of a printing press manufacturer in Berlin-Wedding. The area had been earmarked for sale to an Icelandic real estate investment trust, but when this fell through, the company managed to agree a deal whereby it was granted tenancy rights for the next hundred years. ExRotaprint had its origins in a bbk studio building in the vicinity that could no longer contain all the artists who wanted to work there. The philosophy behind ExRotaprint rejects the idea of a traditional studio building with a monocultural tenant structure (as can be seen in the three models discussed above), but rather seek to promote the site as an “urban interface in the everyday life of Wedding.”<sup>41</sup> Daniela Brahm, one of the members of the company, participated in the aforementioned *raumlabor* discussion, and emphasized the importance of small-scale solutions, suggesting that solidarity with small-scale craftsmanship and trade operators was important, emphasizing, again in contrast to Florian Schmidt, the similarities between such forms of productions.<sup>42</sup>

The “authenticity” of the former printing works is derived not from its historical significance (or the marketing thereof) but from an ongoing set of interactions with the locality. ExRotaprint is home to a variety of ventures which address the socially-marginalized—a school for truants, an initiative focusing on qualifications for the long-term unemployed, as well as carpentry shops, silk-screening workshops, offices for architects and designers, as well as twenty-five studio

spaces for artists. In addition, there is a canteen which functions as a local meeting-point and site of encounter. The project thus represents an attempt to solve the tension “between supporting cultural communities and creativity and selling off and fragmenting the very spaces in which this culture can be cultivated” which Sark analyses elsewhere in this volume. It does this by seeking to integrate itself into the development of this economically—and culturally—challenged district, reconfiguring here what constitutes the “creative class” not as a distinct social grouping, but as a model whereby artistic workers are interconnected with other forms of ‘precarious’ labor and existence in the district.<sup>43</sup>

This model can also be seen in the emergence of the *Allianz bedrohter Berliner Atelierhäuser* (*Alliance of Threatened Berlin Studio Spaces* – hereafter AbBA), a collective formed to call on the government to free up unused buildings to activate a production center for the arts, culture and social affairs. Focused on the space that professional artists require, this collective’s main purpose is not an explicit socio-political agenda. Nevertheless, in the public statements of the AbBA, they explicitly invoke the model enacted at ExReproprint, citing it, as well as other locations such as the *Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik* (*Center for Art and Urbanism*) in Moabit. What these projects have in common, according to AbBA, is that they are lively sites of artistic, social and *long-term* production and encounter for society as a whole.<sup>44</sup>

Doris Kleilein has commented on the way in the AbBA collective demonstrates a level of professionalization in terms of organization and communication by alternative stakeholders which enables them to negotiate directly with the likes of Berlin’s Finance Senator.<sup>45</sup> Striking too is the plan proposed by the AbBA to deal with its current object of interest, the former government *Haus der Statistik* (*House of Statistics*). As a GDR-legacy building, the site belongs to the Federal State, and the Senate has proposed two alternative models for the space. First, the demolition of the building and its replacement by a largely high-rent residential and business quarter that would ultimately exclude artists. Second, the use of the existing building as a center for administrative activities related to the work of the Senate.

One of the principles behind the AbBA counter-plan is a rejection of a classic gentrification model—in which the space is transitionally appropriated by artists in preparation for a general revaluation of the district—in favor of a more durable solution. This was embodied in the plan for the creation of social and cultural diversity at the *Haus der Statistik*, since all other buildings in the area were in private ownership or already rented out. Significant here, and visible in the plan, is the idea of integrating refugees into urban society, something discussed elsewhere by Schuster-Craig in this volume. Under the plan, 45% of the available space would be used for temporary accommodation for refugees; 25% be used for “art and cultural purposes,” providing work space for cultural producers, both in Berlin and those who have come there as refugees. 20% would provide space for educational and integrational projects for refugees, and the final 10% would be used as space for events.

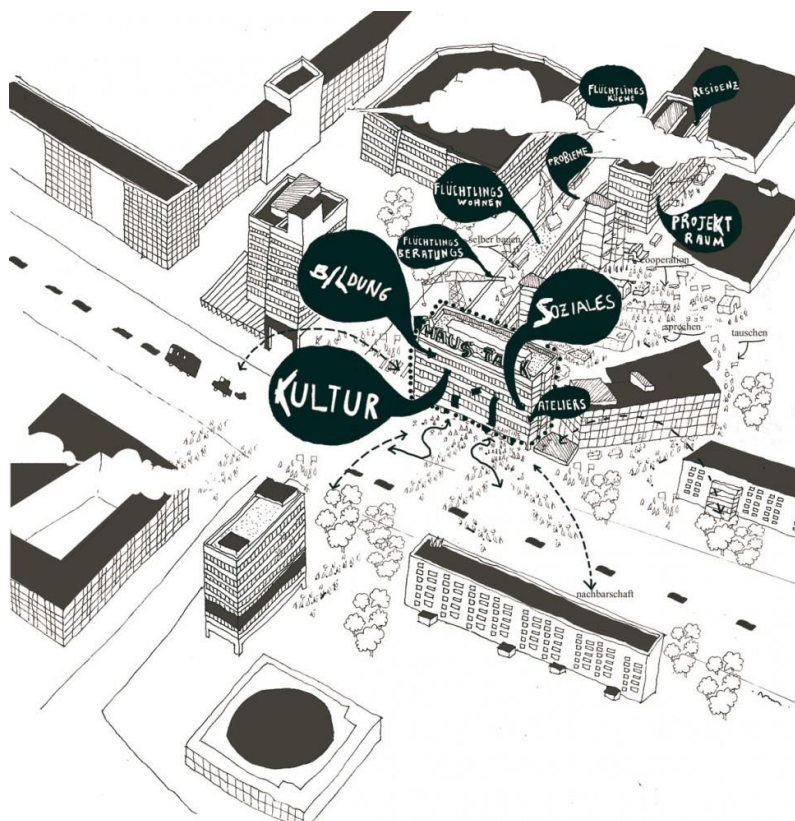


Figure 1: AbBA-Plan for the *Haus der Statistik*. Source: Haus der Statistik, accessed January 10, 2016, <https://hausderstatistik.wordpress.com>.



The debate around the *Haus der Statistik* makes a key contribution to the discursive construction of the ‘creative class’ in Berlin, in that it counters the categorical distinction between (visual/fine) artists and other creative producers. This distinction is ultimately founded on the (doubtless well-founded) suspicion of Richard Florida’s elision of artists with other creative producers, an elision that would lead to the ultimate disappearance of discrete studio spaces. In contrast, this project recalibrates the notion of the creative class, and organizes that group spatially so that they might mutually support each other. The ultimate fate of the *Haus der Statistik* will in the end have much to say about the future of this potential reconfiguration of the creative class in Berlin.

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<sup>1</sup> Anke Fesel and Chris Keller, *Berlin Wonderland* (Berlin, 2014), 9. The publishing house, bobsairport, is a photographic agency founded in 2007 in Berlin by Fesel and Keller. Fesel and Keller came to Berlin in 1990 and became heavily involved in the scene at the Tacheles building in the center of Berlin in the early 1990s, albeit mostly in an organizational role.

<sup>2</sup> On ‘transitional use’, see, for example, Tanja Gallenmüller, *Mind the Gap: Zwischennutzung von Leerräumen am Beispiel des Quartiers Boxhagener Platz* (Mammendorf, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> The ownership and development of *Tacheles* has itself been a long-term issue of debate. See, for example, Janet Stewart, “The Kunsthaus Tacheles: The Berlin Architecture Debate of the 1990s in Micro-Historical Context,” in *Recasting German Identity: Culture, Politics and Literature in the Berlin Republic*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Frank Finlay (Rochester, NY, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1982), 98.

<sup>5</sup> “Economic Prospects Report: Berlin Tops Germany for ‘Creative Class,’” *Spiegel Online*, October 10, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York, 2004), 34.

<sup>7</sup> Martha Rosler, “Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism,” *e-flux* 21, no. 12 (2010), accessed September 10, 2015, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/culture-class-art-creativity-urbanism-part-i/>.

<sup>8</sup> John Montgomery, “Beware ‘the Creative Class.’ Creativity and Wealth Creation Revisited,”

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*Local Economy* 20, no. 4 (2005): 342.

<sup>9</sup> Johannes Novy and Clare Colomb, “Struggling for the Right to the (Creative) City in Berlin and Hamburg: New Urban Social Movements, New ‘Spaces of Hope’?,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 5 (2013): 1816-38.

<sup>10</sup> Anna Pataczek, “Bedrohte Atelierhäuser in Berlin: Atelier ade,” *Tagesspiegel*, September 12, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Huth is described as one of the “invisible giants” of the Berlin real estate investment market in a *Welt* article in 2012. Dirk Westphal, “Die großen Bauherren des Berliner Monopolys,” *Die Welt*, February 23, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> “Geschichte des BW-BLO,” *BLO-Ateliers*, accessed September 10, 2015, <http://www.blo-ateliers.de/geschichte-betriebsbahnhof-lichtenberg-ost/>.

<sup>13</sup> Thuy Anh Nguyen, “Platzmangel: S-Bahn Museum will nach Lichtenberg,” *Bezirks-Journal*, June 24, 2014. That the BLO, the largest independent art community in the east of the city, has survived (to date of writing) has been due in large part to the support it has received from the district administration.

<sup>14</sup> “CDU will S-Bahn Museum nach Lichtenberg holen,” CDU – Fraktion in der BVV Lichtenberg, May 27, 2014, <http://www.cdu-fraktion-lichtenberg.de/meldungen/einzelansicht/article/cdu-will-s-bahn-museum-nach-lichtenberg-holen.html>.

<sup>15</sup> “Über uns,” *Immonen* Group, accessed August 10, 2015, <http://www.immonen-group.com>.

Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Karolina Wrobel, “Industriebauten in der Genslerstraße ziehen internationale Künstler an,” *Berliner Woche*, April 4, 2013.

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<sup>21</sup> David Harvey, “The Art of Rent: Globalization, Monopoly and the Commodification of Culture,” *Socialist Register* 38 (2002): 108.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> In an email exchange between the author and the painter, Klaus Walter, who has his studio in Studios-ID, Walter emphasized the advantages of this setting in terms of being able to work in an undisturbed fashion. Klaus Walter, e-mail message to author, February 18, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Karin Schmidl, “‘Kunst am Spreekníe’ lockt Kreative,” *Berliner Zeitung*, July 11, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Marc Fleischmann, “Postbahnhof, Erdmann-Höfe, Wasserturm, Nalepastraße: Der neue Coup des Immo-Phantoms,” *Berliner Kurier*, June 9, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.; see also Karin Schmidl, “Das größte Musikzentrum der Welt soll in Berlin entstehen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, July 5, 2015; Thomas Loy, “Hollywood und Honecker zieht's in die Nalepastraße,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 28, 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Stephanie Wurster, “Ein vergessenes Idyll,” *taz*, September 15, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> “About,” *Arcadia Unbound*, accessed September 10, 2015, <http://www.arcadia-unbound.de/index.php/about/>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> iHeartBerlin.de’s Facebook page, accessed December 10, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/iHeartBerlin.de/>.

<sup>31</sup> Rea McNamara, “Curating in a Loaded Void: Art in Berlin’s Vacant Communist Architecture,” *Art F City* (blog), September 18, 2015, <http://artfcity.com/2015/09/18/curating-in-a-loaded-void-art-in-berlins-vacant-communist-architecture/>. On Berlin-specific *ostalgie* and nostalgia see Sark’s contribution to this volume.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> In an email exchange between the author and one of the artists who has a studio in the *Funkhaus*, Joachim Seinfeld, Seinfeld expressed uncertainty about the situation going forward, as it seemed as

if Fabich was looking to retain a few “serious” artists, and rent the rest of the space to “creatives” (Seinfeld’s term). Joachim Seinfeld, e-mail message to author, February 20, 2016.

<sup>34</sup> “Artist Interviews,” *The Berlin Studio Program*, accessed July 10, 2015, <http://www.berlin-studio-program.de/artist-interviews/>.

<sup>35</sup> “Das Berliner Atelierprogramm: Stefan Saffer”, YouTube video, 0:43, posted by Berlin Studio Program, October 9, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lAVg-p2XtCc>.

<sup>36</sup> Constanze Suhr, “Atelierhäuser in Berlin,” *tip-Berlin*, September 19, 2014.

<sup>37</sup> raumlabor berlin, *Art City Lab* (Berlin, 2015), 73-105.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>40</sup> Florian Schmidt, “Stellungnahme,” *Kulturwerk des bkk berlin*, accessed August 30, 2015, [http://www.bbk-kulturwerk.de/con/kulturwerk/upload/ateliers/2015-08-20\\_Stellungnahme\\_AB\\_zu\\_HH\\_2016-17\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.bbk-kulturwerk.de/con/kulturwerk/upload/ateliers/2015-08-20_Stellungnahme_AB_zu_HH_2016-17_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> raumlabor berlin, *Art City Lab*, 41.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 162-63.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, *Art City Lab*, 38-41. See Ülker in this volume for a case study of how ‘ethnic entrepreneurship’ engages with similar challenges of economic restructuring within the management of neighborhoods.

<sup>44</sup> “Arbeitsplätze für Künstlerinnen und Künstler (erhalten!) – bezahlbar, langfristig, vielfältig, innerstädtisch,” *AbBa*, accessed January 12, 2016, <http://abbanetzwerk.tumblr.com> (my italics).

<sup>45</sup> Doris Kleilein, “Die letzte Insel,” *Bauwelt* 6 (2016): 2.